



Urban Research Centers



WHO ARE THE URCs?

The Urban Research Centers (URCs) were established in 1995 to identify “what works” to promote the health and improve the quality of life of inner-city disadvantaged populations. Each URC is structured differently, though each includes a coalition of representatives from community organizations, academic centers, health departments, and other private organizations.

WHAT DO URCs DO?

URC partnerships identify health problems affecting urban communities and implement and/or evaluate solutions to these problems. They work to recognize, reinforce, and enhance the resources and strengths of the participating communities.

HOW DO URCs DO IT?

URCs address health problems of concern to communities, using an approach called **“community-based participatory research.”** This participatory process engages community members in all phases of the research, including design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES

- Social determinants of health
- Asthma management and prevention
- HIV and Hepatitis C prevention
- Violence prevention
- Access to and quality of health care

RESOURCES

Core funding and an on-site CDC Health Scientist are provided to each URC by CDC’s Epidemiology Program Office and Public Health Practice Program Office (Office of Extramural Prevention Research) through Columbia University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Washington. Funding provides the partnerships with maximum flexibility to determine research priorities.

URCs seek additional public and private funding for their designated research priorities. Because of their partnerships, URCs are positioned to compete successfully for additional resources. In 2000, the URCs acquired \$8.6 million from other sources, e.g., National Institutes of Health, Department of Health and Human Services, private foundations, and the National Center for HIV, STD, and TB Prevention of CDC.

Detroit Community-Academic Urban Research Center

Principal Investigator: Barbara A. Israel, DrPH
CDC Scientist: Barbara J. Maciak, PhD, MPH

University of Michigan, School of Public Health
Website: <http://www.sph.umich.edu/urc/index.html>

The Detroit URC serves communities on the East side and Southwest side of Detroit. The population of the Eastside is predominantly African-American; the Southwest has the highest number of Latinos in Detroit.

The URC Board includes representatives from six community-based organizations (Butzel Family Center, Community Health and Social Services Center, Friends of Parkside, Kettering/Butzel Health Initiative, Latino Family Services, and Warren/Conner Development Coalition), the Detroit Health Department, the Henry Ford Health System, the University of Michigan, and CDC. The Board has established the following priority areas for developing new intervention and prevention research projects:

- Violence prevention
- Indoor/outdoor environmental health problems
- Access to and quality of health care

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

East Side Village Health Worker Partnership involves 30 community members as lay health advisors to provide guidance on parenting, community organizing, strengthening women's social networks, and improving relationships with law enforcement.

LA VIDA seeks to develop and implement locally relevant, culturally competent interventions to reduce intimate partner/domestic violence in Southwest Detroit.

Bilingual Medicaid/Managed Care Program seeks to improve access to and use of appropriate, high-quality health-care services for Hispanic populations enrolled in Medicaid managed care and to increase enrollment in the Children's Health Insurance Program.

Center for Urban Epidemiologic Studies

Principal Investigator: David Vlahov, Ph.D.
CDC Scientist: Stephanie H. Factor, MD, MPH

New York Academy of Medicine
Website: <http://www.nyam.org/divisions/index.shtml#cues>

The New York URC is working in the geographical communities of East and Central Harlem, areas where a substantial proportion of the residents are poor persons of color.

The URC Board includes partners from academia, the New York City health department, community-based organizations, and CDC. The Board has reviewed community-identified health problems and selected the following areas of focus:

- HIV intervention and prevention
- Hepatitis C infection among injecting drug users
- Injecting drug users (IDUs)

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

A Conceptual Model is being developed to address social determinants of health related to substance abuse in Harlem.

"Hepatitis C in New IDUs" examines whether hepatitis C can be contracted by non-injection drug use.

HOPE: Harlem Outreach Prevention and Education Project studies factors associated with the transition to injection drug use among non-injecting drug users.

Seattle Partners for Healthy Communities

Principal Investigator: James W. Krieger, MD, MPH
CDC Scientist: Donna L. Higgins, PhD

Department of Public Health - Seattle & King County
Website: <http://depts.washington.edu/hprc/SeattlePartners/index.htm>

The Seattle URC defines its research community geographically as a center-city, low-socioeconomic area with a population consisting of one-third each Asian, African American, and Caucasian persons.

The Seattle URC is a multidisciplinary collaboration of CDC, community agencies, community activists, public health professionals, academicians, and health providers whose mission is to improve the health of urban, marginalized Seattle communities by addressing:

- Prevention and control of asthma
- Social determinants of health, with a focus on community development and social support
- Community interests when research is done in the community

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Promoting Assets Across Cultures addresses community concerns about increasing inter-ethnic tensions in public housing sites.

Healthy Homes seeks to reduce exposure of low-income children to environmental contaminants associated with asthma by providing a comprehensive package of science-based interventions.

Rainier Beach Community Education Project will develop and implement a plan to promote life-long, community-centered learning, recognizing that education is a key social determinant of health.